

Guidance on the Wearing of Face Coverings by Employees – Draft post review

Guidance on the Wearing of Face Coverings by Employees Updated 30th July 2020

1. Overview

The Secretary of State announced on 4th June 2020 that face coverings would be mandatory on public transport in England from 15 June and that frontline staff will need to wear face coverings in England. From 24th July face coverings will also be mandatory for wearing in all retail locations.

Prior to this statement the uptake from the public to the wearing of face coverings was low at circa 25%. This has already been discussed at RICF along with the intention that frontline staff need to be role modelling the wearing of face coverings to increase the use by the public.

The Government mandated the wearing of face coverings on-board trains (and stations in Scotland) from 15th June in England and from 22nd June in Scotland. Consistent guidance is set out in this paper for the use of briefing front-line employees.

This document has been reviewed 4 weeks after implementation of the policy with a number of updated changes made in line with experience of its application.

2. Guidance

The guidance set out below aims to provide consistency across the industry.

The guidance assumes the role of our employees will engage, explain and encourage passengers to wear a mask from entering stations to leaving them. This will be achieved through communication (verbal, PAs, posters) and role modelling through their own wearing of a mask and by directing passengers to where they can obtain a mask. Passengers are expected to comply with the new mandatory requirement and appropriate enforcement of passenger requirements and support for our employees will be provided by the British Transport Police.

Face Covering Guidance:

All employees, contractors and tenants should – as far as is practicable – wear face coverings when they are at work in public areas of stations and on trains (where there is no physical barrier between passengers and employees/contractors/ tenants), unless they are exempted from wearing face coverings for medical reasons. This is to support public health measures that require passengers to wear face coverings.

Face coverings are defined in Regulations as “a covering of any type which covers a person’s nose and mouth” and include face masks (reusable and single use), visors and other reusable face coverings provided by the employer. (*Government Guidance for passengers is “A cloth face covering should cover your mouth and nose while allowing you to breathe comfortably. It can be as simple as a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head”*).

Although employees are exempted from the Regulations whilst carrying out their duties, face coverings **will be** expected to be worn by rail employees:

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- when in a train carriage whether working, including traveling “pass” or travelling to/from work;
- on station platforms;
- on station concourses;
- information points/booking offices without a glass or Perspex barrier
- when travelling in road transport such as taxis/buses/coaches.

General use of face coverings **will not be** expected to be worn by rail employees

- when behind glass or Perspex barrier such as in a booking office/ information points where social distancing can be achieved;
- In train cabs – front, mid or rear when on own;
- In offices and mess rooms away from customer view;
- Where there is a medical restriction that prevents wearing face coverings such as asthma.
- in non-passenger facing locations such as siding and maintenance depots including walking routes and task requires a face covering/mask.
- When communicating to hearing impaired passengers
- Where it is impractical to carry out a task whilst wearing a face covering

It should be noted that application of these arrangements should include risk assessment to minimise the risk to employees for wearing face coverings including consideration of wearing for prolonged periods and/or in hot weather.

Rail companies will engage, explain and encourage passengers to wear face coverings directly and via public address. This is part of the public health messaging and employees are not expected to enforce this.

In line with ORR guidance “Face coverings and masks available for assurance purposes are not mandatory PPE and therefore do not fall under the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992. Face coverings and masks when worn properly can provide a physical barrier against transmission to others and do not prevent the inhalation of the virus. This approach is being adopted outside of a medical environment, including by the emergency services when working in close proximity such as working within the same vehicle.

The British Standards Institution (BSI) have created a guide to masks and face coverings for use in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic to aid procurement.”

ORR also recommends that

To promote a consistent approach, whilst at work and when travelling to/from work, employees should normally use face coverings/masks or visors made available to them by their employer. The use of separately purchased or homemade face coverings, masks or visors by employees ~~can~~ may be used if assessed as suitable by their employer.”

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Note this guidance was presented at the Rail Industry Coronavirus Forum and agreed by industry partners with the addition of the ORR advice above on 11 June 2020 and has been updated on 30 July 2020.